



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown  
Eastern District of California

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## **NINE INDICTED FROM FRESNO, SAN JOSE, AND SEATTLE IN LARGE-SCALE KHAT CONSPIRACY**

FRESNO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that MOHAMED GASS HERSI, 50, AMRAN ISMAIL ALI, 45, GASS MOHAMED GASS HERSI, 22, ABDIKADIR MOHAMED GASS, 19, FOOSIYA MOHAMED GASS, 20, MUHYADIIN ISMAIL ALI, 42, all of Fresno, and ABDULKADIR GASS HERSI, 52, ZEMZEM MOHAMED ILMI, 44, of Seattle, and YUSUR ROBLE SAID, 43, of San Jose, Calif., were indicted in a 14-count indictment with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute, distribution and importation of Khat, possession with intent to distribute and distribution of Khat, possession with intent to distribute Khat and money laundering.

This case is the product of a joint investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Fresno Police Department, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the California Highway Patrol, the Merced-Mariposa HIDTA Task Force, the California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, Tulare County Sheriff's Department, and California Alcoholic Beverage Control. The case is being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office in Fresno, California.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Stanley A. Boone and Laurel Montoya who are prosecuting the case, the defendants were charged in the indictment with conspiring to import, possess with the intent to distribute, and the distribution of Khat. The importation charge alleges that the defendants imported Khat into the United States from Kenya, China, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom. Once they imported Khat, the defendants and others then sell the Khat for cash to other distributors and/or personal users of the narcotic. The defendants and others often used private commercial delivery services to import the Khat from overseas and to distribute it to elsewhere in the United States.

On January 29, 2009, law enforcement officials executed 11 search warrants in the Fresno area, Seattle, and San Jose related to the case, seizing Khat, money, and a tractor-trailer rig. All of the defendants, except ABDULKADIR GASS HERSI, who is in custody in Seattle, are expected to make their court appearances today before United States Magistrate Judge Sandra M. Snyder at 1:30 pm.

Khat, which contains cathinone and cathine a Schedule I and IV controlled substance, is a flowering evergreen shrub native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Khat that is sold and abused is usually just the leaves, twigs, and shoots of the Khat shrub and is chewed intermittently to release the active drug. Dried plant material can be made into tea or a chewable paste. Khat can also be smoked and even sprinkled on food. Common side effects include

anorexia, tachycardia, hypertension, insomnia, and gastric disorders. Chronic Khat abuse can result in symptoms such as physical exhaustion, violence, and suicidal depression. Widespread frequent use of Khat impacts productivity because it tends to reduce worker motivation. Khat can induce manic behaviors, hyperactivity, and hallucinations.

The charges are only allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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